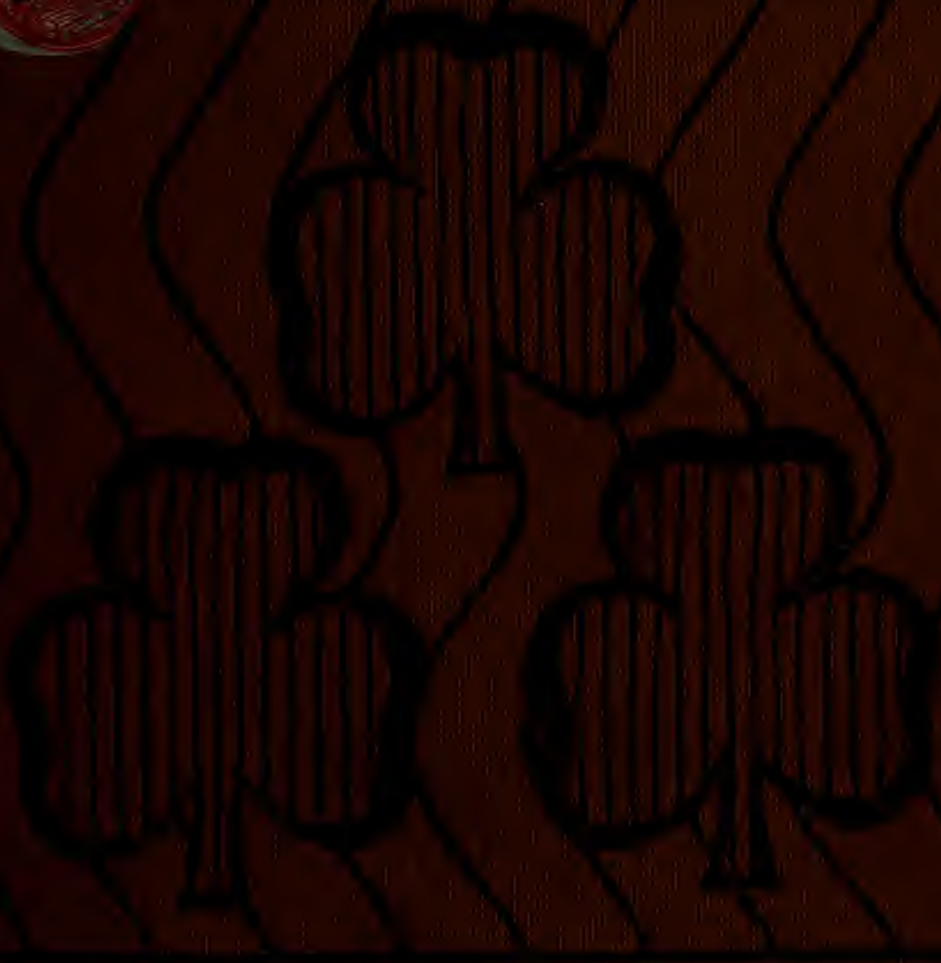
THREE GIFTS.



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See page 50.

THE HOUSE OF REST.

THREE GIFTS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

KEITH ST. JOHN

Author of Interior Views

Mrs. Katherine St. J. N. Union.

1904

The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company

New Haven

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THREE GIFTS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

KEITH ST. JOHN

It is now ten years since this signature first appeared in our local papers, and during that period has received a cordial recognition.

The contents of the book present a considerable diversity of subjects: the home people, the children, the flowers and trees, as well as the basic principle of the divine and human nature are written of in a style which is pleasing and gentle. Many of the poems have already been published; they have appealed to a wide circle of readers, and have given their quota of comfort and pleasure. The kind interest evidenced in them by the friends of the author, now prompts their compilation and presentation to the general public, with the hope of a wider distribution and influence.

K. St. J.

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THREE GIFTS.

Take Rest unto thyself, Dear Heart,
And comfort thee,
No burden shall be laid in thy weak hands,
But strength alike, to satisfy demands,
Shall come to thee.

Take Faith unto thyself, Dear Heart,
And solace thee;
Gloom, impenetrable, may dim thy way,
Move calmly on and thou shalt see the day
Grow bright to meet thee.

Take Love unto thyself, Dear Heart,
And comfort thee;
For Love embraceth all, then hold it fast,
And live serene till days be overpast
For me and thee.

February, 1903.

THE HIGHEST DUTY.

When I came down stairs this morning,
And I did not feel real spry,
I thought the things around the rooms
Looked unusually awry:
There were skates upon the settle,
And caps upon the floor,
So I gathered up what lay around,
For half an hour or more.

Then down I sat in rocking chair,
Before the library fire,
And thought, "Now Madame Mother,
What is your heart's desire?
Would you wish your house immaculate
From dust and litter free,
No books or gloves just tossed about,
No children round your knee?"

The vision of a boyish grace,
With shoulders broad and braced
As if to shield me from such storms
As often must be faced;
I saw his eyes so true and bright,
They gleam with mischief, too,
And thought, if they were blotted out,
Ah! me, what should I do.

And then I saw a winsome maid,
With roguish ways and wild,
A saucy, loving, careless girl
But yet my own dear child:
My eyes grew misty and my heart
Beat quick with love and fear,
For love would guard each cherished one,
And smooth their path each year.

And thus I made no long delay
To tell my heart's desire;
To guide them well and give them love,
I see no duty higher.

1902.

TO THOSE THAT NEED.

If to those weary souls that feel the strife,
Of taunts and gibes that wear upon their life,
I may some comfort give to cheer their way,
My calendar shall mark a well-spent day.

Lift up your eyes and look upon the trees;
How strong, yet restful bend they in the breeze;
Each year God dresses them anew in green,
Each day throughout our lives His hand is seen.

If trees stand not within your daily sight,
Look to the skies, where sun and stars shine bright;
The glorious sun and twinkling stars each say,
Our Great Creator planned and guides your way.

The happy bird bathes in the wayside rill,
Flies past your window, with his thank a trill,
The circling world swings true; through life to death
God soothes the soul that hangs upon His breath.

July, 1900.

MY ROOM.

There is a little room I call my own,
And in it I am never quite alone,
I see the pictured face of that Dear One,
Whose lips taught mine a prayer when day was done.
And opposite my bed in golden frame,
There smile five baby faces, all the same,
My little Catherine as she looked when five,
Till she is grown, dear Lord, keep me alive.

November 13, 1902.

A KNOT OF BLUE.

A knot of blue, a knot of blue,
I put it on, my Dear, for you,
Because I know you like the hue,
To show that I to you am true.

A knot of blue, a knot of blue,
I know, dear one, that very few
Would think this simple thing to do,
To show that they to you were true.

A knot of blue, a knot of blue,
Since both our hearts are piercèd through
With love, I think what can I do
To show how dear you are and true.

A knot of blue, a knot of blue,
The flowers sip the morning dew,
They smile on me as if they knew
How dear I am to you and true.

A knot of blue, a knot of blue
  My life could hold no happy view,
No flower blossom save the rue,
  If I to you could be less true.

A knot of blue, a knot of blue,
  The story old, yet ever new,
Ne'er comes the day when we shall rue
  The time we gave our promise true.

May, 1904.

TEN KISSES.

A kiss I send for my baby's brow,
God keep it as pure and fair as now.

And two I send for her dear bright eyes,
May the sunshine of love never fade from her skies.

One kiss shall be laid on the tip of her nose,
She will dream all the night she is smelling a rose.

For the dear rounded cheeks I will send kisses two,
May gladness and health flush them both with their hue.

For her loving red lips I send yet another,
Which goes to her straight from the heart of her Mother.

And one she must have for her dainty round chin,
Though it quiver with sorrow, may it ne'er droop with sin.

Her two listening ears are with kisses caressed
That she may hear only what is truest and best.

November, 1899.

THE VOICE OF THE BREEZE.

What says the breeze
In the top of the trees,
On a day like this when the skies are grey?
It says, do not wait,
Till all things are straight
But fling cheerfulness round, as I do the sound
Of my voice on a day when the skies are grey.

What says the breeze
In the top of the trees
When the sun shines hot, and rain cometh not
On a day like this when the skies are a glare?
Still the same refrain
Again and again,
Be cheerful, be kind, 'tis the best thing to find
In the earth, or thy lot, on a day like this when the skies are a glare.

What says the breeze
Thro' the top of the trees,
When the day is turned night and stars are so bright,
When the day at its close is hushed to repose;
In a night like this when the heart beats low?
God wakes while you sleep, closed eyes do not weep.
Folded hands cannot toil, nor deaf ears heed the moil,
But silent and still, they shall wait for His will,
In a night like this when the heart beats low.

July 30, 1902.

I KISSED HER CHEEK.

I kissed her cheek.
She started from me with a grave surprise;
And yet I saw no anger in the eyes
That sought with swift appeal to read my face,
As mutely asking a few minutes' grace.
Yet when I said, "Now darling, I must go,"
She answered bravely, "Yes, 'tis better so."

I kissed her cheek.
It was so soft and round, so brown and cool,
Had I done less I were a calm-veined fool.
If just a touch of passion thrilled me then
How could I help it? Swift came the moment when,
Our hands unclasped, and we must say farewell,
And shall we meet again? Ah, who can tell?

I kissed her cheek.
This once I felt its velvet softness 'neath my lips.
As once a bee, from some rare flower the honey sips
The flower blooms on, and fills its destined day;
The bee forgets the nectar, as he drones his way.
But I—the nectar of that kiss! It thrills me yet!
And of my heart I vainly ask, "Doth she forget?"

July 12, 1895.

TO S. R. B.

I have a dainty friend
With eyes of brown,
So happy hearted she
That ne'er a frown
Mars the soft fairness
Of her placid brow,
Which shines above her eyes
Like driven snow.

There sits enthroned
A winning grace,
That draws a loving thought
When face to face,
And in my heart
From day to day,
It keeps a happy memory
To cheer my way.

August, 1904.

MY HAND IN YOURS.

I.

Take my hand in yours, Dear,
And hold it fast and strong,
You know we cannot tell, Dear,
If it will be for long.
While palm to palm is clinging,
Do you recall the time
When fingers twined and swinging,
They swung to Love's dear chime?

II.

Your hands are big and brave, Dear,
They grapple with the world,
Fear never comes to you, Dear,
As in it you are whirled.
When blows of Fate are falling,
Whose echoes fill the air,
I hear your dear voice calling
To cheer my weak despair.

III.

My hands are small and frail, Dear,
They cling for strength to yours,
If cold and still they lie, Dear,
Our Father's strength endures.
This thought should guide our living
So passing through each day,
With praise and true thanksgiving,
As He points out our way.

IV.

Then take my hand in yours, Dear,
And hold it fast and strong,
You know we cannot tell, Dear,
If it will be for long.
Now swift the years are drifting,
Of love I crave a store
When one the Veil uplifting,
Our hands may clasp no more.

November 27, 1903.

MY BOY.

He has a great big, loving, tender heart,
My boy,
And still of childishness a master part,
My boy.
He thumps about and both heels pound the floor;
He rushes in and out and bangs the door;
Does all these things like every boy before,
My boy.

When I am labor weary and would fain lie down,
My boy
Will gravely scold and show a lordly frown;
My boy
Will read to me, in halting, scrapey voice,
That yet hath tones which make my heart rejoice,
And prove my lad will be an honored choice,
My boy.

March 1, 1901.

SWEET, MY DEAR.

Sweet, My Dear.
My little maid with sparkling eyes!
Go daintily about the house,
And give us all a glad surprise
To see thee quiet as a mouse.

Sweet, My Dear.
My little maid with dancing feet!
Step lightly, tripping to and fro,
And let us smile whene'er we meet,
And smile again to watch thee go.

Sweet, My Dear.
My little maid with singing throat!
I smile thy morning songs to hear,
And list thy childish treble float
To me, a messenger of cheer.

Sweet, My Dear.
My little maid with restless hands!
Now lay them softly on my brow,
They are the rivets of love's bands,
They point fulfillment of my vow.

Sweet, My Dear.
My little maid with loving heart!
Oh! May I help thee day by day,
And show thee life with tender art,
Until our days must drift apart,
And thou go singing on thy way.

Saturday Chronicle—
April 19, 1903.

POLLY.

Pretty little Polly
  Traveling on the train,
All dressed out in blue and white:
  Think you she is vain?

Bright green eyes has Polly
  Dainty little ears,
Although her first trip in the cars,
  Polly has no fears.

Her traveling dress is just a bag!
  What do you think of that?
This is the truth and not a joke,
  For Polly is a cat!

July, 1901.

THE POWER OF LITTLE THINGS.

The small but sturdy rivet holds the bright steel rails in place;
The prayer of daily minutes is what fills the soul with grace;
The tiny cochineal imparts to yards its scarlet hue;
Our great dreams fade, of real account the small things that we do.

October, 1904.

THISTLEDOWN AND DAFFODIL.

Thistledown is full of grace,
Two dark eyes light up her face;
Tripping tongue that laughs and sings,
Much discomfort oft it brings.
But we love dear Thistledown,
Never on her long we frown,
For our winsome one is weighted
With the seed of good, and freighted
With the presage of some glory,
Which will enter her life's story.

Daffodil is tall and slender.
Her dark eyes are grave and tender:
Shining curls of raven hue
Shade the face that 'witches you:
Broad low brow, with thought is graven,
Less of earth and more of heaven.
But her stately ways and slow
Change to match the sport and glow
Of Thistledown; thus hand in hand
They frolic through dear childhood's land.

February 25, 1904.

SPRING LOVE SONG.

Across the brown earth, slipping coat
Of snow and ice, I hear it float
The call of Spring, from robin's throat,
As he pipes to his mate
And I to you.

Beneath the grass roots, soft and slow,
The wine of summer soon shall flow,
And leaf and bud will wave and glow,
Toss kisses to the sun,
As I to you.

The call of Life thrills through the air,
I breathe it, feel it, everywhere,
The joyous cup, to quaff I dare,
For pulsing Life is Love!
And I love you.

March 21, 1904.

TO WILLIAM LAWRENCE CHITTENDEN,

THE POET-RANCHMAN.

Oh, Larry, genial Larry, with the shoulders broad and straight,
Well set on trunk and length of limb, that swing a Western gait!
When you hear his pleasant greeting, feel his handshake, see his smile,
You will say with sure conviction, "Here's a fellow that's worth while."

The Constitution State claims him, that's on his father's side,
Who traveled from Connecticut to win a Southern bride.
We see this strain commingled in this breezy Texan man,
Who can organize a "round up," or play the Pipes of Pan.

Oh Larry, kindly Larry, you but crossed our path one day;
That day shines bright in memory and so it will alway.
We look forward to a meeting with this cavalier so kind,
Which shall pass through mere acquaintance and a friendship true shall bind.

Short Beach, 1901.

A SONG WITHOUT WORDS.

The sleepless night is dark and long;
The world so still
I feel its thrill
Of silence, like a wordless song.

May 12, 1904.

"COME AND REST."

Dead, dead, dead.
With her hands folded soft on her breast,
Now the dear, willing feet are at rest,
And the lips mine so often have prest,
Still and cold.

Dead, dead, dead.
On her grave and my window, the rain
Falls ceaselessly; never again
May I list for her loving refrain
As of old.

Dead, dead, dead.
The long lashes lie on her cheek,
Hiding eyes that could flash or be meek,
Mid my memories only I seek
For such eyes.

Love, Love, Love!
Can death even hold us apart?
While I live I bear thee on my heart,
I am thine, until God's shining dart
To me flies.

Rest, rest, rest.
In the silence of souls, thou art blest;
By the whirl of the world, I, oppress;
But thy calmness my soul shall invest,
While it waits for that welcome behest,
"Come and rest."

March, 1903.

A MUTE CARESS.

He kissed my cheek,
So light the touch,
Like passing of a bird's soft wings;
Like cadence of a whispered song;
Like flush of rose the sunrise brings;
Like flower perfume stays not long.

He kissed my cheek,
So dear the thought,
My heart gave then a happy bound,
The warm blood leaped thro' all my veins,
My feignèd sleep a secret found
That solace gave for many pains.

He kissed my cheek,
So deep the love
This mute caress thus gently proved;
I bound the knowledge on my heart,
Nor from its truth shall I be moved,
For of my soul it is a part.

September 18, 1904.

WHY THE WATER-LILY HAS YELLOW STAMENS.

I

When earth was fresh and tender,
And all the flowers were new,
They waved in the sunlight golden
And all of the self-same hue.
A lily lay on the waters,
When earth was new and fair,
She opened her snowy petals,
And their fragrance filled the air.

II

Down from the sky came sun rays
And sought the lily's cup,
They loitered all day at her chalice,
Yet drank not her perfume up—
When the sun withdrew his shining
Away went the sunbeams bold,
As token of their visit
Left the lily a heart of gold.

June, 1902.

IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM McKINLEY.

To that fine nature born in forty-three,
Two centuries of people bow the knee.
The heart of his republic throbs with pain,
For prayers and skill to save his life were vain.
"Goodbye, it is God's way, His will be done,"
Fit dying words for Freedom's noble son,
So wise, so steadfast and so loyal true,
He taught to all mankind what man may do.
The people chose him First in our dear land,
The lowliest in it still might take his hand,
Head, hand and heart all fed his country's life,
Nor yet forgot the measure due his wife,
Sad, gentle soul, that bravely did her part
To soothe his pain; a martyr sure thou art.
A nation's prayers surround thee night and day
And beg God's healing for thy dark dismay,
Intrepid soul, now standing in his place,
To thee our greeting and God send thee grace.

September, 1901.

THE GARDEN OF SILENCE.

Withdraw unto thyself; seek silence; take a little space
Of Time, and in it sow the seeds
Of all the virtues, for thy daily needs.
Plant patience, wisdom, gentleness and love,
And there shall come such sun-warmth from above,
That while thy hand still smooths the moistened ground,
The swelling seeds upspringing shall be found
To run with dew and sun their fruitful race.

And when thou leavest that dear garden spot,
A courage, fresh and strong, shall fill thy heart,
To make thee glad and willing for thy part;
To bring a thought of cheer where'er thou art;
To offer balm for every poisoned dart;
A radiance thus from thee shall fill the mart
Of life, and Joy become the common lot.

1903.

WHEN MORNING BREAKS.

How fair the first faint lights of sunrise
On the sky,
With stately march the sun uplifts his crown
On high.
A listening, throbbing watch is brooding
O'er the earth
Proclaiming with a voiceless voice
The new day's birth
When morning breaks.

The chill of night is gone and warm
The sun rays fall,
They gild the wakening leaves and glide
Along the wall.
The reveler, now with stealthy steps, creeps
To his home,
Secure, if to its shelter he may
Haply come
Ere morning breaks.

Ten thousand ugly phantoms, shapes and fears
That fill the night
Melt like the dewdrops on the springing grass
At morning's light.
The wakeful, weary eyes, that sadly waiting,
Watched all night,
Close soft in slumber, after greeting each
Familiar sight,
When morning breaks.

The grey mists of the night lie on the earth,
In drops of dew,
The soulless, sinless things on foot and wing
Their joy renew,
And slow the hum and toil of human life
Throbs on the air;
And of the burden of the world, each soul
Must take its share,
When morning breaks.

Ah, when the last great morn in glory dawns
About our world,
When finished stands our every life and scheme
And earth is hurled

Into dim space, how will our souls endure
That searching light?
Shall we receive a crown or pass condemned
From out his sight
When morning breaks?

January 24, 1894.

LUCINDY.

Oh my lub, she libs way down in ole Virginny,
Whar de possums an' de watermellums grow,
Oh, my heart it is a-bustin' for Lucindy
Jest ter see her dance de "heel an' toe."

REFRAIN.

Oh my honey, oh my honey,
I lubs you all de day an' all de night,
Your har am glossy like de corn silk,
An' you eyes like de stars so bright.

When de tassels am a-wavin in de corn field,
An' de pickaninnies rollin' on de flo'
Den Lucindy she am feelin' kindy wistful
Wanter see dis niggar comin' in de do'.

REFRAIN.

Oh my honey, oh my honey,
I lubs you all de day an' all de night,
Your har am glossy like de corn silk,
An' you eyes like de stars so bright.

I kin see de moon ashinin' on de cabin,
I kin hear de banjos tinkle down de lane,
An' I tell you folks I neber shall be happy,
Till I'm back wid ole Lucindy onct again.

Refrain.

Oh my honey, oh my honey,
I lubs you all de day an' all de night,
Your har am glossy like de corn silk,
An' you eyes like de stars so bright.

1896.

SOLOMON'S SEAL.

Wave on thy stalk, in the forest fair,
  Flower of Western clime!
Swing thy small bells in the sweet spring air,
  And peal a silvery chime.

Call to thy sisters across the way,
  Ring, ring, ring!
Tell them the winter has fled away.
  Swing, swing, swing!

Thy glossy leaves stand in stately row,
  On stem of living green,
They hide thy fair bells, how dainty they grow,
  Like dew drops with silver sheen.

The fireflies dart thro' the twilight dim,
  To light thy chorus of bells,
That rings so softly the evening hymn
  For the fairies that live in the dells.

O, stately plant, with the Wise Man's name,
How many wise things he did say;
His legend for weal or woe was the same,
"This also shall pass away." *

* It is related that an Oriental once sent to King Solomon asking for a motto for a seal ring, a sentiment which should admonish in time of prosperity, and equally console in days of adversity. The last five words of the poem constitute the king's answer.

Living Church—
September 16, 1893.

A MOTHER'S THOUGHT.

The day is surely coming, and coming very fast,
When broken dolls and ragged books will be items of the past,
And I thought this very morning, as I tidied up the hall,
That I really should be sorry when these things are not at all.

There are banging doors and windows, and naughty little wails;
There are bumps and scratches many, and poor cats with twisted tails;
There are tears of pain and passion, and they burst out fierce and quick,
But it's never a good method to subdue them with a stick.

Oh, the tender, wilful little hearts, that beat in many homes,
That believe in elves and fairies, in dragons and in gnomes,
That look forward to the wonder-days, when all the books are through,
When they'll turn their backs on childhood and can "do as big folks do."

Oh, the pathos of their longing, oh, the sadness of the truth
That will come to these dear baby hearts, when parted from their youth.
We have trod in all their footsteps, we have tasted hope and grief,—
Shall we hesitate one moment in a plan for their relief?

L. of C.

Let us lead them gently, firmly, through the blissful days of youth,
Let us show them it is possible that Love shall dwell with Truth,
Let us revel in their innocence, forgive them when they fail,
As we shall beg "Our Father" to, when our lifeboat furls its sail.

April, 1902.

NOT ALONE.

There is a holy of holies
Within my heart,
To it no one may enter,
For set apart
To memory of a baby soul
God lent to me,
I keep this spot all pure and white
For him and me.

I know not if those baby eyes
More wise have grown;
I only know through all these years
I'm not alone:
I feel a baby hand from heaven
Reach down to me;
I know a stainless soul above
Will plead for thee.

See up and down this weary world
Some souls there be,
That fret and strain to break their bonds,
And be set free:

Are restless for the appointed time
Which God has set,
To show them why through earthly years
They have not met.

But that grand soul which fairly meets
The problems hard
This vexing earthlife deals to all,
With Faith a guard
To keep his soul serene and true,
Must live each day,
In kindly honor, and shall find
Peace light his way.

So he is bravest, best, who waits
Secure to know
His Father's reason for the earthly coil
Which vexed him so.
There is no soul outside God's care,
And we shall see
Fulfilment of His plans divine
For thee and me.

Thursday, Nov. 26.

I UNTO THEE AND THOU UNTO ME.

"I send you my love and I beg for yours,
Till the stars shall bring us together."
The words are true and the words are sweet
As the wind o'er the Scottish heather:
Across the river and over the hill,
These words come to me from my lover,
With sounds of twilight, and pale young moon,
New beauty in them I discover.

The night rolls by and the sun flares up,
The dew and the dawn now are greeting,
My heart sings low and my heart sings strong,
So soon I my lover am greeting.
In touch of hands and speech of the eye
There is more than the lips can utter,
With footsteps slow and cheeks wine red
And the heart like a bird aflutter.

"I send my love and I beg for yours
Till the stars shall bring us together."
Ah, sweetheart, you know I'm always true
In cloudy or sunshiny weather.
In sickness or health, in joy or dole
Through our veins but one pulse is beating.
"I unto thee, and thou unto me,"
Our hearts, as a song, keep repeating.

September 1, 1904.

THE HOUSE OF REST.

How long I now to pass within its portal wide,
And closing soft the door, to rest and sleep awhile,
To ease my heart, 'till I can waken with a smile,
Within the House of Rest.

The ceilings low and white, the doorlatch old and worn;
The rooms are full of memories, sweet and sad,
They are the pattern of my own, now dull, now glad,
Far from the House of Rest.

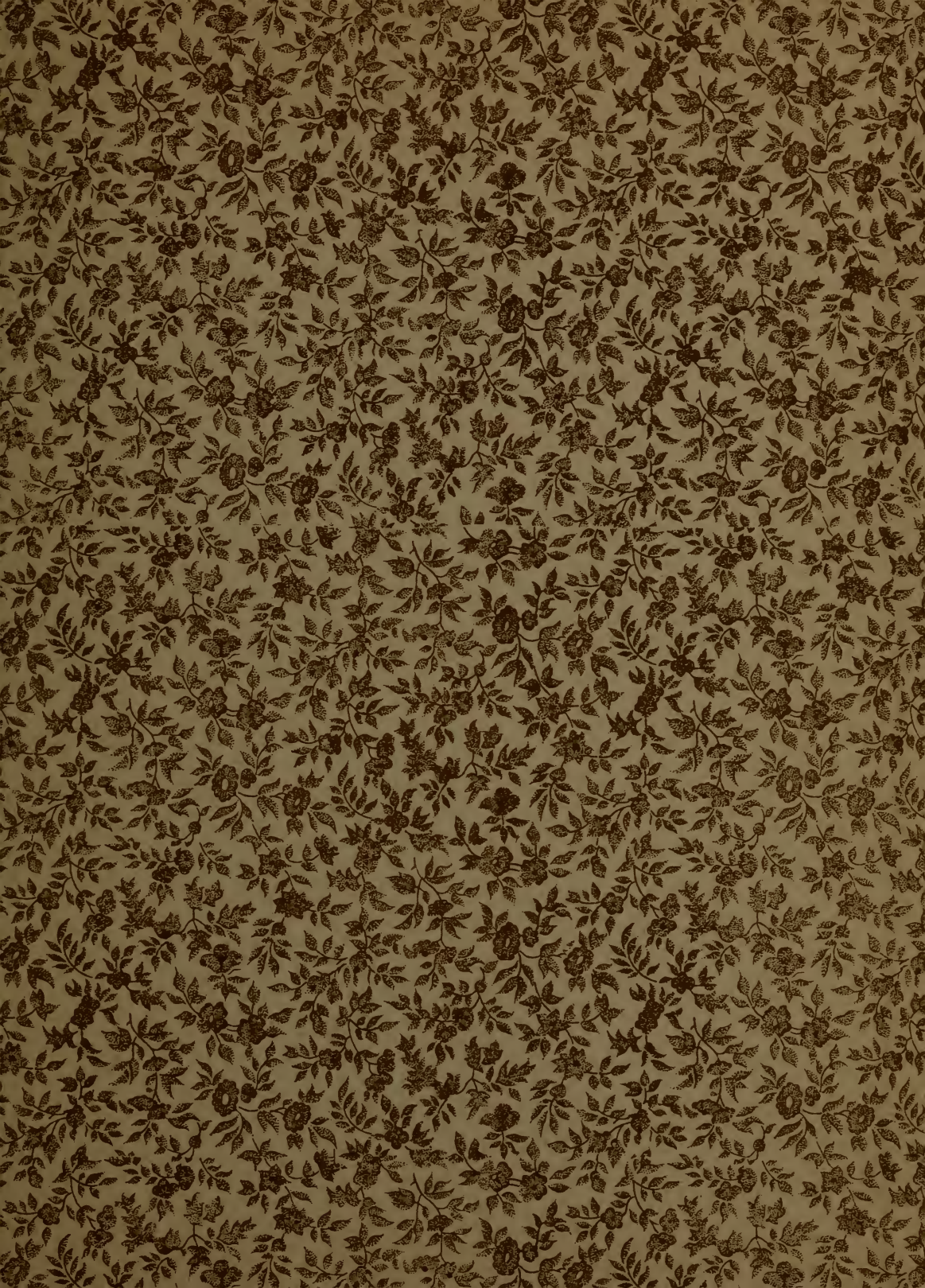
Oft to its sheltering calm, in other days my feet have flown;
For comfort, like a child, at close of day,
And those now gone have bid me weary stay,
In Mother-arms, their House of Rest.

Dear House of Rest!
Where even now a flickering flame of life so faintly burns
I wait with bated breath to hear the flame has quavered out.
The door and shutters barred, and I in doubt,
Where I can find a House of Rest.

October, 1902.

FINIS.

DEC 2 1904



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